GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4649
ANSWERED ON:19.12.2001
NON-REPRESNTATION OF INDIANS
MALYALA RAJAIAH

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) Whether Indian settlers in Fiji have not been given representation in the Country`s new Government;

(b) If so, the details thereof;

(c) Whether the Government have taken any steps to see that interests of the Indian settlers are safeguarded there; and

(d) If so, the details thereof?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH)

(a) & (b) General elections were held in Fiji under the 1997 Constitution from 25 August to 1 September 2001.The Fiji Labour Party, led by Mr. Mahendra Chaudhry, which represents the majority of Fijians of Indian origin, emerged as the second largest party in the House of Representatives.The Constitution of Fiji stipulates the formation of a multi-party Government with the representation of all political parties with at least 10% of the seats in the House of Representatives. In apparent disregard of this constitutional provision, Mr. Laisenia Qarase, the new Prime Minister and leader of the largest party, SDL, in the House of Representatives, did not include the Fiji Labour Party in the new Government.The Fiji Labour Party has taken the matter to the court in Fiji.The ruling of the court is awaited.

(c) & (d) The Government of India have been in touch with the international community regarding the situation in Fiji, and have emphasized the urgent need for a constitutional Government in which the political and economic rights of all citizens of Fiji are safeguarded. India has maintained that until such time that a constitutional government is in place, Fiji should not be readmitted to the Councils of the Commonwealth.The Government have also taken steps such as provision of loans by Bank of Baroda for the resettlement of displaced farmers of Indian origin, and an increase in the number of scholarships and training slots made available to Fiji.